

Historic, Archive Document

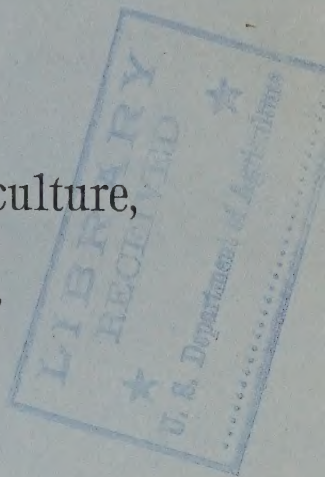
Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

United States Department of Agriculture,

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

Seed and Plant Introduction and Distribution,

WASHINGTON, D. C.



PASPALUM DILATATUM.

This grass is known also under the names of Large Water Grass, Golden Crown Grass, and Hairy-Flowered Paspalum. It is a smooth perennial, with a deep, strong root system, and grows in clumps or bunches 2 to 4 feet high. The leaves are numerous near the ground, but few on the stems. Paspalum produces seed rather freely, but owing to the fact that it ripens from the tip downward and shatters off as soon as ripe, good viable seed can be gathered only by hand.

Paspalum dilatatum is a native of South America and perhaps also of the Gulf States. At any rate it occurs apparently native from North Carolina to Florida and west to Texas.

Importance.—In Australia, paspalum has proved to be a valuable grass. Agricultural writers claim that it has transformed the north coast of New South Wales into one of the most profitable dairy regions in the world. It is said to remain green when all other grasses are dried up, and several successive cuttings, aggregating 13 tons (green feed) per acre, were obtained at the Wollongar Experiment Station the season following the seeding. In the Tweed district paspalum pasture is said to support one dairy cow per acre the year round.

Cultivation in the United States.—No extensive cultivation of this grass in the United States has been attempted. In the Southern States, where it spreads naturally, some farmers have permanent meadows or pastures consisting largely of this grass. Owing to its tendency to lodge, it is better adapted for pasture than for hay.

Southern experimenters claim it to be one of the best winter pasture grasses for heavy, moist, black soils. It remains green all winter unless injured by severe frosts, and persistent grazing will not injure it. An immense number of leaves are produced, which are renewed more quickly after grazing than those of Bermuda grass, and under favorable conditions a paspalum pasture will last indefinitely. The character of the sod is improved by mixing redtop seed with the paspalum, as both grasses do well on the same class of soils, and the latter is too bunchy to cover the ground evenly when planted alone.

Culture.—Great care must be used in seeding paspalum to have the ground in the very best possible condition. The seed is very light; hence it is best to sow broadcast 5 to 10 pounds of hand-picked seed per acre. Sow on ground which has been thoroughly harrowed, and then roll or plank the seeds in.

In the Southern States it is usually best to sow in October or November. If it is used for soiling or hay, it should be cut before the stalks become coarse, as the quality is much superior if the grass is cut when 18 to 24 inches high. By mixing the seed with that of redtop, Bermuda grass, and winter vetch the grazing capacity of the pasture is much increased, and the tussocky character of paspalum meadows is largely overcome. North of North Carolina and Arkansas this grass winterkills and should therefore not be planted.

Under irrigation paspalum has proved to be an excellent forage grass in the San Joaquin Valley, California. Judging from the favorable Australian experience, paspalum ought to be valuable as a dry-land grass in many parts of the Southwest, where it should be fully tested. Farmers are cautioned, however, to test it first on a small scale, as the seed is expensive and the chances of success doubtful.

Seed.—Seed of paspalum is quite high priced and usually of low germination. The best hand-picked Australian seed rarely germinates over 50 per cent and costs 40 to 60 cents a pound. In the Southern States the flowers are commonly affected with a black fungus which seems to injure the seed. At any rate southern seed is very poor, often germinating only 5 to 10 per cent.

